

volume one, fall 2002 issue

New Voices

a collection of student writings



A Community College
of Indiana partner

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Congratulations to the writing students at the Community College of Indiana who have worked so diligently on the pieces published in this first issue of *New Voices*. The collection of writings here are a representative sample from all English classes on the Indianapolis campus. The English faculty regrets it was unable to include all submissions, many of which were also noteworthy.

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Table of Contents

From Factory Worker to College Student <i>By Karen Meadows</i>	5
The Hidden Waterfall <i>By Steve Beers</i>	10
A Traffic Solution <i>By Courtney Kramer</i>	15
A Perfect Score <i>By John Lucas</i>	21
Recording Music <i>By Brett A. Chambers</i>	26
The DQ Experience <i>By Paul Casler</i>	29
The Search for the Meaning of Life <i>By Francoise Thenoux</i>	32
Sheltie Rescue: Joy and Pain <i>By Jack Maynard</i>	40
Fun and Excitement Working at the State Fair <i>By Kim Caban</i>	49
Facts about Breast Cancer <i>By Nicole Jones</i>	55
The First Day of Basic Training <i>By Yvonne L. Russel</i>	61
My Family I Do Love <i>By Anjala Batchfield</i>	64

(continued to page 4)



Have Yourself a Merry Christmas <i>By Mary Lankford</i>	66
Small Miracles <i>By Amy Lynn Scott</i>	71
The Curious Visitors <i>By Linda Myers</i>	76
The Right to Privacy <i>By William Dezam</i>	79
Old Man Walt <i>By Kathy Bryan</i>	89
Wrong Job <i>By Kyle Rudolphi</i>	96
How to Sumbit Your Manuscripts/Art Work to <i>New Versions</i>	102

From Factory Worker to College Student

By Karen Meadows

On a September afternoon in 1999, production at the General Electric plant in Bloomington was shut down early for the day. All the employees were filed out into the main parking lot for a meeting. The Plant Manager and the Union President were standing on a flatbed semi waiting to inform us that 1400 jobs would be cut from the plant and moved to Mexico. After the meeting the rumors started flying around about who would get laid off. In December 2000, there was a lay off, but I wasn't one of them. I was bumped from a B-11 upgrade to a B-10 where I lost 11 cents per hour. That did not matter, however, since I still had my job.

I was happy until March when the rumors started again about another lay off in June. On May 16, 2001, my Business Team Leader (BTL) handed me a piece of paper stating that I was to be laid off on June 1, 2001. They thanked me for my contributions to GE Appliances-Bloomington, Inc. and wished me the very best in my future endeavors. This did not help

and panic set in. I began thinking about my work experience. All I had was 18 years of factory experience and that wouldn't get me anywhere now in a job search since factory jobs are disappearing.

The Union had filed petitions and fought for us to be covered under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NAFTA has two programs, the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and the Trade Readjustment Allowance (TRA), which would pay for the retraining of the displaced workers who lost their jobs to Mexico. These programs cover tuition, books and supplies. They also pay unemployment for up to two years, if the worker meets these requirements: be a full-time student, attend all classes, and carry a C average.

After a long discussion with my husband, he told me that I did not have one good reason not to attend college. So the decision was made for me to go to school. My first step was to go to the Work One Center in Martinsville. I had to do a career search, where I found the medical field to be in the biggest demand. I started thinking about my past experiences, crying with my children when they got their shots, almost passing out when I had to take my son to the

emergency room after a bicycle break when he split the back of his leg open, and I decided this field wasn't for me. As I continued my career search, the paralegal degree caught my eye. I found out that paralegals do the researching for cases, and it sounded good to me, because I like to read.

After a mountain of paper work required by NAFTA, I took my entrance exam, signed up for my classes and began to prepare for college. I was beginning to think that finding a job would be easier. As school started and I began to attend my classes, I realized that there are some similarities between the two. As I kept this in mind, school did not seem so life changing as I had first thought.

I began comparing the different classes to the different models of refrigerators that we made. Every day at work we were given a daily schedule of what models would be run. Here at school, in each class, I was handed a schedule that listed what was to be done every day for that class and for the semester.

At work I was required to be prepared with tools, parts, and perhaps gloves or finger tape for what models would be run that day. In class I am required to be prepared with the books that are required, along

with a binder or folder, pens or pencils.

Tests at work consisted of shifting me to different departments and receiving a very short educational speech on how to run the machine and what would be needed for the job. Tests in college will be written and will determine if I have retained enough knowledge to continue my education.

The people are different in the two places. In college, everyone is here to further their education to meet the changing work force. In the factory, there was a variety of people, some of whom were satisfied with putting their 40 hours in and getting a paycheck. I was in this category. There are those who worked nights and went to school during the day. There were some who were unable to overcome the problems of not being able to find an extra baby sitter or extra money to further their education.

My time is basically the same. At work I was required to clock in on time, be there every day and be prepared. If I didn't meet these requirements, I would be fired. College is not much different. I am required by NAFTA to attend at least 12 hours a week per semester. The only difference is I have an attendance paper, instead of a time card, that has to be

filled out each week and signed by a professor. I am required by NAFTA to pass each class. If I do not carry a C average, I will be dropped from the program which is similar to being fired in the work force.

I have realized that I can transfer my work ethics and habits to my college education. Being on time, being there every day and being not only physically prepared but also mentally prepared are requirements for both. I am learning with these similarities that the chance to go from factory worker to college student is not just a life-changing experience, but also a great opportunity for me.





The Hidden Waterfall

By Steve Beers

It was a warm day in fall when we took that hunting trip to Okanogan County in the eastern part of Washington State. Golden, rolling fields gave way to wooded hills of huge pine trees as we drove to the northern part of the county. My father had little sleep and drove hours to cross the snowcapped Cascade mountain range, bringing us there to hunt grouse.

My brother, Wayne, was about thirteen-years-old at that time. I was two years older. Wayne was not much of a hunter, so my dad had suggested we put our fishing poles in the car when we packed the night before. Okanogan County is very remote and sparsely populated, with only the occasional farm or ranch dotting the landscape. We stopped at small woodlots or ravines to hunt and managed to get a few game birds. The crisp, frosty morning was quickly overtaken by the warmth of a bright sunny day. I had stomped through plenty of brush for one day by the time a noonday sun signaled us to stop for lunch.

While driving out of a hilly area, on a road that followed a small creek, Dad spotted a gravel pull off

along the side of the road. This was a great place to stop for lunch. I remember it was so green and bushy the creek could only be heard, not seen from the car. After finishing sandwiches and drinks we had brought, Dad felt like a nap. It had already been a long day for him. He suggested I take Wayne over to the creek to fish while he slept. "You might catch something," he said. The sun was beaming through the window on the passenger side of the car where I sat. It was getting overwhelmingly hot about that time, so I quickly agreed, even though I was tired, too. After some safety reminders and instructions to watch out for my brother, we got our fishing gear out of the trunk and headed for the woods.

A short walk from the car, the creek was hiding only forty feet into the trees. It was hard to even cast out in the first spot I tried to fish, so we moved upstream to find an easier place. There was a roar ahead that seemed unusual for a small stream. Wayne shouted for me to wait up as he struggled to make his way through the bushes with a pole in his hand. I paused near a large uprooted tree until Wayne caught up.

We agreed to find out what made the water roar

ahead. Walking on around a short bend in the creek, there was a beautiful waterfall. Water spilled over solid rock to fall twenty feet into a pool that was mostly covered with a thick foam from the churning water movement. Most of the creek was fast water flowing over a rocky bed. It was hard to fish without getting snagged. However, the waterfall had carved out a nice long pool deeper than we had seen downstream. A fallen tree across the pool held the foam back from washing downstream. I have seen moving water with bubbles or foam like this before. Seems like it has something to do with the falling leaves in autumn.

At first I tried casting near the foamy bubbles. After a couple of throws a good sized fish hit my lure hard, but it got away when it disappeared under the mysterious foam. Soon another strike on a small lure yielded our first fish. The trout fought hard to get under the foam as the last fish had done. Struggling, somehow I managed to drag it to shore safely. Wayne was amazed at the strange fish with colored spots on it. I had never seen an eastern brook trout before, except on the back of the fishing regulations. I took the pamphlet out of my tackle box to be sure. The body was a beautiful brown, with almost fluorescent

pink and blue spots that ran along each side, down low near the belly of the fish. This trout was over a foot long and well filled out. It just looked so healthy.

I put the prize fish on a stringer and set it back in the cold water. Continuing to fish, we cast out more than once, but we did not have much luck. I got a little desperate, and cast directly into the foam-covered water. Another fish went for my lure. My brother could not take it any longer. Wayne asked, "What are you using? I can't get a bite." I was fishing with a very small flatfish lure with a single hook. There was one more in my tackle box, so I gave it to him. Soon we were both landing one fish after another. All of them were big, fat, eastern brook trout.

Tragedy struck Wayne first; his line broke and he lost the lucky lure. I kept casting in the hot spot. Unfortunately, I lost mine not long after Wayne. We switched to several other lures trying to match the magic, but none would encourage the fish to bite like the lucky flatfish lures had. We had plenty of fish by now anyway.

Time really flies when you are having this much fun, and it was starting to get away from us. It was time we returned to the car before Dad started to

worry. We had several plump, fourteen-inch trout apiece. They were heavy to carry. It was an unexpected pleasure to struggle to the car with a full stringer of fine fish. I led the way through the woods, heading toward the road. Wayne followed, complaining about the brush making it difficult to walk. We came out of the woods in a different place than we entered, but it mattered little. With a quick look around to orient ourselves, I spotted the car and we marched on. My father was already out of the car as if he was about to call for us. He told us so before we had a chance to catch our breath. Wayne and I rushed to tell our fish story about the waterfall and the lucky lures that worked so well. Dad laughed and said, "I told you so" (Referring to telling us to try fishing in the creek while he napped).

This was one of those wonderful days you don't expect to experience again. We never returned to that fishing hole, but I will always remember it and the great day fishing at the hidden waterfall.



A Traffic Solution

By Courtney Kramer

Driving into downtown Indianapolis daily is a requirement for many people employed by Indianapolis companies. With numerous people driving into downtown, congestion can be horrendous. Accidents and road rage are common occurrences, causing increased frustration among all drivers.

Along with the increasing number of cars, the carbon monoxide pollution in the city is also increasing. From 1999 to 2000, the first and second maximums of pollution observed over one hour periods increased from 4.9 and 4.8 to 6.4 and 5.7 respectively (Indiana Air Quality Monitors for Carbon Monoxide, 2001). Although these numbers never exceeded the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Air Quality standard, the amount of pollution within the city's atmosphere is increasing.

Daily traffic volumes for roads leading into downtown Indianapolis are also increasing. I-65 South receives a daily average of 85,887 cars; I-65 North receives 74,300 cars; I-70 West, 79,103 cars; I-70 East, 119,358 cars; and SR-37 South, 29,624 cars (Annual

Average Daily Traffic, 1996). As can be imagined by these numbers, the “wear and tear” on our city’s roads is extreme. Traffic conditions for Indianapolis, as recorded by digitalcity.com, reports thirty-seven separate construction sites around the city at this time (Traffic Conditions: Indianapolis, 2001). One of the most interfering construction sights is the I-465 construction from the Pendleton Pike exit to beyond I-74 South. As proven by these many points, the traffic into downtown Indianapolis desperately needs a solution.

One plausible solution to the traffic problem is mass transit in and out of the city. This could be accomplished by building a series of railroads coming from the North, South, East, and West that would deposit the passengers into a system of downtown buses. These systems of railroads could consist of already available train lines: the Pennsylvania Railroad systems from the East and South, the Baltimore and Ohio line from the west, and the Monon line from the North (Dolzall, 10). Including today’s technology, passes to ride both the trains and the buses or just one of the two could be issued as a type of prepay or credit plan. The trains would be a pleasing solution

because the train stops for no one on its way into the city, unlike driving an automobile. The ride into downtown would be short and stress-free. Some possible weaknesses would be affordability of the system for the customers and the cost of implementing the system, as well as the convenience of the railroad stations within the suburbs or in the city with relativity to homes or places of business. As seen with the State Fair every year, the train from the Fishers station to the fair is a popular and enjoyable experience. Riding the train enables people to avoid parking and traffic issues when they arrive.

Car pool lanes could also serve as a solution. These single lanes on major freeways would encourage people to car pool into downtown. Therefore, less cars would be moving into downtown each morning. In most other cities that utilize the car pool lane, the minimum amount of people in the car is limited to 2 persons, and the violators of the car pool lane receive tickets and heavy fines. The car pool lane solution has become very popular in King County, Washington. In this area, there are online services that will find a car pool for an interested person based on their work place and home (Cleary, 1). In Tacoma,

Washington, the process of destroying an overpass to add car pool lanes to highways has begun. The addition of the extra lane available to car-poolers only is imagined to be a tremendous improvement to their traffic flow (Turner, 1-3). Although this solution seems useful, it would be extremely difficult to regulate, and car pool lane offenders would be abundant, even with the penalties for violating.

Building multi-level roads, as seen in large cities such as San Francisco, would also help to solve a traffic problem. The multi-levels would not only decrease the traffic during rush hours, it would also reduce the constant wear and tear on roads, making construction hassles sparse. This solution may be unfeasible because of the cost involved in creating the multi-leveled streets. The roads would also take many years to complete.

Working from home has become more prevalent in today's society. Increased technology and 2-way videos make it possible for many jobs to be completed in the home. This solution would not only reduce the traffic situation, but it would also enable employees to be close to home or at home in an emergency. Many new mothers also prefer the work-at-home

method so they can be with their children and still have a source of income. Government subsidies could be awarded to companies that choose the off-site approach to encourage more companies to implement the solution. This idea may not hold appeal to companies due to the prices of the technology involved, but on the other hand, more good employees who need the at-home arrangement would be drawn to these companies.

Another solution is the idea of multi-site clusters around the city for different businesses. Large office buildings built by real-estate investors could be placed in many suburbs around the city and house numerous companies at a time. Satellites could be used to link these offices with their home office. This would reduce the traffic problem by moving these companies into the convenience of the suburbs. Less cars would be traveling into downtown, and not as many people would have a need to use I-465 as a means of travel from one suburb to another. Not only does this solution allow employees to stay within their suburbs, it also permits face to face professional interaction and idea sharing with other people in the company, an extremely important aspect in most businesses.

There are a multitude of possible solutions to Indianapolis's traffic situation. Although individual solutions may not be a panacea for the problem, a combination of strategies may relieve a large amount of the congestion.



A Perfect Score

By John Lucas

When I was in the school of performing arts I always felt I had to have a superior rating at state contest. My mission was to always get a seven or a perfect score. I was fifteen and in the tenth grade, and the year was 1982.

I was in the school of performing arts at Broad Ripple High School but I attended Attucks for my regular classes and for the ninth grade. I enjoyed the friendship of most of my fellow band members but there was something missing. I was so much more musically advanced than most of my friends it spawned a type of jealousy, but at the same time admiration. I was able to keep some bad feelings under control by not showing off constantly. Sometimes a jealous band member would still make a comment.

My sophomore year I enrolled in performing arts. Then, you had the option of commuting to Broad Ripple by magnet bus from your home school or you could make a complete transfer. Commuting required you to reserve an extra class period from your class

schedule. This extra time could be used to take a graduation requirement instead of being wasted traveling. Also I felt more comfortable being around students whose musical ability was a lot closer to mine. Some even had dreams and ambitions that were similar to my own.

In the middle of my sophomore year I transferred to Broad Ripple. When the band members at my home found out, they called me a traitor, but they really didn't want me to leave. The new band members and the performing arts office were both excited and accepting. Out of spite the band director at Attucks gave me my first B in music.

February was the month of the state contest. In this contest you were rated. Your solo or ensemble scored from one to a ten in seven different areas. One is the highest in each area. The divisions are first, second and third.

I had been working on my solo for months. My private flute teacher, Mrs. Alice Akins, had me rehearse and perform my solo over and over. I could play my solo by heart without making a mistake. I played the solo exactly the way she taught me, note for note, breath for beat. She had me play for a

Sunday cathedral service. As I performed I watched her face light up with pride and enjoyment of the music.

The morning of the contest I was nervous. I knew the band members from my old school would be there performing their solos and in their ensemble groups. This did not worry me as much as making a first division rating.

When I arrived, I went to the information desk and got a program. At state contest you have a printed schedule of the times everyone competes and for what judge and room they will compete in. My performance time was eleven-thirty with a judge that my private teacher knew. The judge didn't know me or my private tutor.

I walked around and listened to the other contestants. Because it was an open performance and anyone could listen, watching a contestant and waiting for the judge's score of the performance was exciting. One could think the music sounds good, but it's the judge's score that decides the fate. The judge could say the musical interpretation was incorrect like phrasing, breaths taken when they shouldn't have been, and so on.



When it was my turn to play I went to the warm up room and down the hall to the judge's room. There was another contestant in the room performing. I was next. When the door opened, I walked in and fifteen of the band members from my old school were in the room. Some of them smiled and nodded, but some of them sneered. This didn't worry me. I was prepared. Then my old band director came and made all of his students leave the room. Without even looking in my direction, he left the room and the attendant shut the door.

The solo I was performing was Handel's Sonata No. 1, movements one and three. I knew this piece of music backwards and forwards. When I began playing, I dug into it like never before like my life depended on it. The judge sat with a stern look on her face and didn't make a move until the piece had ended. Then she made several quick motions on the scoring sheet. She asked me how long I had been playing and thanked me for my performance and the attendant opened the door for the next contestant.

I walked out and saw all fifteen of the band members from my old school and some from my new school. They all applauded and shook my hand. Then

it was time for the results from the judge. I knew I had rated first division, but I needed to know the score.

We walked to the information desk and got the scoring sheet. It read, Superior Rating First Division Perfect Score. That was one of the proudest moments of my life. I got hugs and kisses from all around. The judge even wrote a comment on my scoring sheet. It read, "It's nice to hear a student play a baroque piece correctly and with proper interpretation." That was really an honor, and I will never forget the day of my first perfect score.





Recording Music

By Brett A. Chambers

When listening to your favorite song, did you ever wonder how much time and effort went into getting that music on disc? Recording music is a complicated and time-consuming process. For me it was also a very interesting and rewarding experience.

To begin with, I had spent approximately two months with my new band mates writing and rehearsing the four songs we intended to record for our demo. After we had put all of the music together, it was time to choose a studio and book it for our recording sessions. We chose Audio-Chroma Studios in Crawfordsville, Indiana. The owner, who was also the recording engineer, offered us the best package of cost and time, so we booked the studio for six nights over a two-week period. I believe overall we paid \$160 a night plus the cost of any adat tapes (digital recording tapes) we used.

Getting started and doing the actual recording was very exciting and educational. In addition, I was also very nervous and intimidated. I have been singing on and off for half of my life, but never in a

professional recording studio. However, in the music business “time is money” so we had to get the ball rolling.

Finally, after the completion of all of the instrumental tracks, it was my turn. We had already recorded our reference tracks but that was all done live in one take. Now I had to go one-on-one with the microphone. It was difficult for me to get started. Somehow I had managed to come down with a cold and I was in horrible shape for singing. Many of the tracks required recording over and over. The guys in the band, and the recording engineer, were very patient with me as I struggled to hit the notes to finish the recording.

On the other hand, there was the fact that I was in a studio environment and not performing in a live setting. This meant that things had to be handled and done differently. Some of the little mistakes were quite humorous. I had always been used to being able to move around and handle my microphone. However, in the studio sound room there was an absolute need to be quiet and still. Touching the microphone would have resulted in unwanted noise. The slightest jingling of the change in my pocket, or

my sniffling and clearing my throat, would pick up on the very sensitive condenser microphone.

Then when all of the vocal tracks were done, it was time to mix down the recordings and make master copies. It was very interesting how I could record “dry” vocal tracks, and then at mix down add the desired effects. We experimented with several different delay and vocal distortion settings. After I decided which of the recorded tracks sounded right, we mixed down all of the tracks on to master copies and the recording process was done.

In summary, the next time you listen to your favorite song, take into consideration the time and effort that went into the making of that recording. For me, it was a very rewarding and self-satisfying project. Since then I have left the band and gone solo. With the experience and knowledge I have gained, I am looking forward to an even better finished product with my next recording project.



The DQ Experience

By Paul Casler

Dairy Queen, a restaurant known for its hot eats and cool treats, which includes burgers, hot-dogs, blizzards, and Mr. Misti's, was a job experience to remember. There are many reasons that this job was and is unforgettable and that is due to the personalities of the managers, customers, and employees.

Most often, my job duties were to run and operate the drive-thru window as smoothly as possible and make sure the customers were satisfied. Occasionally I would work the front counter or the grill. Still the main objective was to make the food and satisfy the customer.

The managers of Dairy Queen were in a league of their own. By this, I mean we had two sets of managers: one set of two men and one set of two women. What was different was that both sets were homosexual and together as a couple. I guess it really was not that bad since the couples never really showed their affection at work, but they always did joke about their sexuality and how they were "non-breeders" and the rest of us were "breeders." My managers were actu-

ally quite fun to work with due to their openness and the humor they had. The thing I respected most about them is that they actually treated me as a person instead of just another employee. The managers always added laughter to work by quoting movies and we would have to guess what movie they came from or by starting a song we all knew, and we would all sing it or try to guess the title of it. I believe that all of my managers helped me get through the tough year and a half that I worked there.

The customers were always good for a laugh themselves. It never failed that at least once everyday a customer or two would show their true colors whether it was outside through the drive-thru line or inside at the counter. But in general, they proved to be pleasant and funny. Probably the worst-case scenario I faced with a customer was when a lady cussed everyone in the store out just because we ran out of the topping she wanted in her blizzard. The manager and I tried to explain to her that the topping she wanted had been very popular all evening and that the truck didn't come until Monday to stock us back up. Overall though customers usually worked with us and did not give us grief.

Finally, the thing that I enjoyed most about working at the DQ was my fellow co-workers. The great thing about it was that I worked with almost all my close friends and even a couple of family members including my sister and cousin. Working with friends made work a lot more enjoyable. Work really did not seem too much like work. There are not too many places where you get to work in an environment with all of your friends and also get to eat great food!

Dairy Queen provided me with a great beginning employment opportunity. The managers supplied the fun environment to work in, the customers made it easier to serve them, and my fellow friends and co-workers made work enjoyable. However, the best benefit to working at Dairy Queen was its hot eats and cool treats!



The Search for the Meaning of Life

By Francoise Thenoux

In *The Alchemist*, a book by Paulo Coehlo (1998), the main character while searching for a treasure, discovers a universal truth. According to the story, the truth is that we all have a purpose in life; there is a path to be followed and this path takes us to our fulfillment and to the understanding of the universe. The alchemist also discovered that the real treasure lay inside of him, and that the real alchemy happened when he made his dreams come true and transformed his heart to gold. The only problem during the story, was that he was following the wrong path because he was not listening to his heart. He followed the path that he thought was going to make him happy but that didn't happen, because he was making the decision based on his mind, which was socially conditioned. He found the truth when he started listening to his heart.

Has not the nature of man been one of the mysteries that humankind has been trying to clarify since the beginning of the times? Who are we? What is our

purpose in life? These are questions that all cultures and civilizations have tried to answer, but what is happening with us at the turn of the millennium? Across the time there have been always too many answers to those questions; now we have forgotten even the questions. Spirituality seems to be lost in our materialistic and individualistic world. We lack a transcendent purpose in our existence. We don't care about other people's suffering anymore. There is a massive moral indifference translated in a complete lack of social conscience. Morality is a personal option; what is good for me may not be good for you or why should I think about ecological problems, poverty, hunger, violence or war? Even for the followers of a specific religion morality is relative. We don't want to improve our inner world or the world where we live either. We definitely lost the path.

The story of *The Alchemist* is a parable of what a man needs to do to find real happiness, inner peace and fulfillment. The man needs to find his path but first of all, he needs to find himself, his spiritual nature. Why does this story sound like a fairy tale for most of the people? According to Douglas Porpora (*Landscapes of The Soul*, 2001), humans have lost the

moral meaning in their lives. People are not emotionally attached to moral purposes. We have lost contact especially with spiritual emotions. These emotions cannot be acquired by the intellect but by the heart. He explained, “We truly discover who we are only when we identify the moral purposes toward our life” (2001, p.10). In general, moral purposes connect our self-vision with the great meaning of life or Cosmos and this is our moral identity.

And I wonder what moral identity do we have if we don’t know who we are? We deny our spiritual self and what is worse we cannot locate ourselves as an important piece in the Universe. The problem is that, “we experience ourselves soulless” (Porpora, 2001). Most of us believe in the existence of our souls but have never experienced it. According to Brian Weiss (*Messages from the Masters*, 2000), the human truth is that we are spiritual beings experiencing physical lives. To me it seems that we are so concerned about our physical life, that we forgot the spirit completely. We consider ourselves students, lawyers, democrats, husbands, but those are only social labels for our social world. Those are not our real identities. And here comes the moral purpose again, our real identity is

based on something that we truly stand for or our own moral purpose. “To know who we are, we need to know the moral directions in which our souls are pointing” (Porpora, 2001,p.20). We need a moral purpose to life, something that we stand for, a purpose to be useful as a human to the rest of humanity. Moral purposes connect us with our path, the meaning of our lives and at the same time with our identity. The moral purposes are derived from our idea of the meaning of life, our cosmology.

What role does God play nowadays? Most of the people would say that spirituality may be alive. We are profoundly religious, but I say, “Be careful. Reality is not always what it seems to be.” In the building process of his book Porpora conducted a research on a wide variety of social landscapes in America. People from different religions and credos answered questions like, What does God mean for you? The results were contradicting because although most of the people confirmed their belief in God (95%), the majority of them never experienced God or saw God as an emotional inspiring exemplar of good. God was for them an abstraction without emotional presence in their lives. He wrote, “ We may continue believing

in the God from the stories without believing in or being moved by the stories themselves”(2001,p.18). He concluded based on his statistics that the God in whom Americans believe is a “floating signifier without referent”(2001, p.18).

Not to believe in just a floating signifier, we need to feel our souls connected to God. The problem is that, we are unable to see ourselves as part of a unity. We are individualistic. That is why we lack empathy; we cannot feel if we are empty; caring only about small material things. We need to have a sense of unity. We need to recognize that we are connected with all things and that at the same time we contain all within us. Emerson in his essay “Nature” lectures us with just two lines on the meaning of unity “ I become a transparent eyeball, I am nothing: I see all, the currents of the Universal being circulate through me; I am a part or parcel of God”(The American Tradition in Literature, 1999, pp334-370).

To believe in God is more than going to church and praying on Sundays. Even the most religious people usually commit the fault of discriminating against the people who don’t share their same beliefs. Just thinking that we are better than others makes us

worse. I ask myself, “Where is God ? I cannot see him. I don’t see him in the fake charity of giving money for blind causes. We donate something material in public that feeds our social ego, so are we doing it for ourselves or for the one who is in need? What happens then, when our attitude towards others in our daily life does not reflect charity, love and concern at all?

Most of the problems of our modern society come from this lack of spirituality. According to Dr. Michael Mamas, “ To determine the level of wisdom that is lively in a culture, we need to look no further than the overall...the state of humanity in every country today is living testimony that adequate understanding of the nature of life is not available”(*Angels, Einstein and You*, 1999, p.252). Our mind is trapped in our small little world, small little work, small little house, small little life. Our mind is too worried about the past and the future to live the present, to enjoy the smile of a child or the color of the trees, too worried to see the greatness of God. “ We had narrowed our focus to material economics and for so long refused to entertain the idea of a deeper spiritual experience because we didn’t want to be reminded of the great

mystery that is life" (James Redfield, *The Celestine Vision*, 1997).

But, how to discover our moral identity, purpose, and place in the Universe? Porpora said that naming the emotions we lost is not enough. We need to feel them, or at least feel the feelings related to them. He proposed Literature as a very practical way to achieve this purpose (*Landscapes of the Soul*, 2001) He has not been the only one; Robert Coles also in his book, *The Moral Intelligence of Children*, mentions it. He stated that moral vision or imagination can be activated by the reading of literature which carries a moral lesson in it, something that can awake our empathy and make us sensible to the problems and sufferings of other people.

Transcendental writings would be useful to awake our numbed spiritual conscience or any kind of literature, which can open our metaphysical dialog with the universe. By questioning we can discover our personal truth and destroy the paradigm thinking in which we based our pseudo truth and as a result create our personal cosmology. Tara Bennet in her book *Emotional Alchemy* wrote, "We should find out what is true for ourselves, rather than just taking some



authority's word for it. Instead of just blindly believing, we should use an investigative mode to discover our true nature and who we are apart from the constructed self and the fabrications of our ordinary perception" (2001. p.227).

Finally, the day humans understand God is not an abstraction but is an energy living in nothing but in everything. That every person carries God inside, and that every single pebble in this earth is part of the same energy. The day people stop pretending to believe and start living God, that day humankind will finally find the soul that it lost a long time ago. Recovering an emotional connection with us, the rest of humanity and nature, will let us find the meaning of life and our purpose in the universe. We have to be aware of our spiritual nature and be responsible for that. Nobody can do our job, nobody can be good for us. We are all made of the same material. Why won't you be the one who changes the world? When we get out of our private world and open our hearts to discover our souls, we will recognize ourselves as part of a great everything. We will never be lonely...we will never be apart, because our house will be nothing but the Universe itself.





Sheltie Rescue: Joy and Pain

By Jack Maynard

Pet rescue is actually a polyglot of assorted animal rescue groups. There are cat rescues, rescues for almost every breed of dog and even rescue groups for pygmy goats and potbellied pigs. Volunteering with any of them can be among the most rewarding experiences of a person's life. At times, it can also be one of the most painful. My own interest lies with Sheltie rescue.

Sheltie rescue is actually a loose confederation of local and state Shetland sheepdog rescue groups operating under the blanket support of the American Shetland Sheepdog Association (ASSA), the national organization for the dedicated show and competition breeders, also known as the Fancy. Rescuers take in unwanted, abandoned and abused dogs, get them any necessary veterinarian attention (including shots and spaying or neutering, if the animal is still intact), place them in foster homes for personality evaluation and any socialization the Shelties may need, then work to place them in suitable homes. The latter is more

important than most people realize. The last thing a rescuer wants to do is place a Sheltie in the wrong home. Placing a Sheltie fearful of children in a home full of kids, or introducing an aggressive dog into a home with other animals would be a disaster and would probably land the dog right back in rescue.

One of the most painful cases I have experienced involved a sweet, gentle little sable and white Sheltie named Merlin by his first foster mom. One morning in January 2000, a Bloomington woman found him sprawled in her front yard, half starved, his fur matted with mud and ice, and she claimed he smelled like a garbage dump on a hot summer's afternoon. He appeared to be half dead. According to her, "When I reached down to touch him, he barely had the strength to move his head around to lick my hand." Being a dog owner herself, she realized that death was not far off for this poor, pathetic, malodorous bag of bones, and carried him into the house to give him as much care as she could.

Knowing that she possessed neither the knowledge nor the resources to care for this Sheltie over the long term, she contacted Vicky, a volunteer with Indiana Sheltie Rescue whom she happened to know.

Vicky took custody of the dog, and after giving him a much-needed bath and haphazard grooming, began the painstaking process of nursing him back to health. Although she did not hold much hope for success at first, Vicky worked herself ragged trying to save the dog. The progress this gentle, affectionate Sheltie made was so slow that it took several days for Vicky to notice any sign of improvement, but by the end of his second week in her home, he began to roam around, learning the layout of his refuge.

Within a month, the good food and care transformed him into the ideal Sheltie. He wore the charming Sheltie smile, looking as if he found the world slightly funny. He exhibited the famous shy affection for people Shelties are so well known for, his tongue constantly ready to distribute wet, sloppy kisses to all that wandered into range. He “cleaned up good” and we all felt deep pride and satisfaction over his progress. It was then that Vicky named him Merlin, figuring that only magic could explain his dramatic recovery. Merlin, whom she estimated to be about four-years-old, acted like a rambunctious pup, always ready to play.

Because her apartment was so small, and Merlin

possessed such an overabundance of energy, Vicky decided to send him to live at another of our foster homes. This one had a fine, quarter acre, fenced yard in which Merlin could run and play to his heart's content. Unfortunately, the new volunteer got careless on the drive back to her house. She forgot to put his leash on him before letting him out of the car. He bolted. Had Vicky been there, he would likely have obeyed her command to stop, but, since he had had no time to bond with Cathy, he ignored her and ran.

As soon as we got the word, we got into gear. For over a week, rescue volunteers searched the neighborhood. We set out baited live traps. We even covered a twenty square block area with posters. Still we heard nothing. We were frantic, especially me. Only a few weeks earlier, I had done the home visit for Cathy and I alone bore the responsibility of approving her to foster.

Then, on the ninth day, we got the phone call we had all been dreading. Merlin was dead. He had tried to cross a busy street and had been hit by a car. All of Vicky's work and care had been for naught.

We recovered the body and laid him to rest on a small farm belonging to another of our volunteers.

As I shoveled the dirt over his poor, broken body, while crying like a baby, I vowed that never again would I make the same mistake and approve the wrong person to foster one of these precious dogs.

Lucky and Pepper, on the other hand, were two of our more successful and rewarding rescues. Lucky, a small, almost petite fellow of about eighteen months, had also been on the wrong end of a hit and run. In the autumn of 2000, a Good Samaritan found him lying along side a country road near Noblesville after a car had hit him and took him to a local veterinarian who just happened to have a working relationship with our group. Since the dog wore no collar or tags, had neither identifying tattoo nor microchip implant, the vet decided to call our adoption coordinator to see if we would be interested in accepting him into rescue. As soon as Teresa heard the particulars about this injured vagabond, she authorized the vet to treat him at our expense. Then she made a beeline for the office to be there when he awoke from the anesthetic.

Lucky quickly recovered from his physical injuries and received his new name as tribute to his new lease on life. With time Teresa noticed that Lucky seemed

to have a problem. He didn't have the same alertness and mental edge so common among his breed. After a battery of tests, the vet gave Teresa the bad news: "He has Chronic Vestibular Syndrome. That is a form of mild brain damage, probably resulting from the hit and run, with symptoms similar to a mild stroke among humans. He should continue to live a long, relatively happy life, but he'll never measure up to the standards of a normal Sheltie, and will occasionally suffer mild seizures."

This broke Teresa's heart. As much as Lucky deserved a normal, happy home of his own, his condition would make it hard, if not impossible, to find him his own family. She decided that he would get the chance to lead as normal a life as he could.

She entered him in obedience classes and he learned. True, he didn't learn as fast as his fellows, but he learned. Then she entered him in agility classes. Again he learned until he finally got good enough to compete. He may never win a ribbon, but he loves to get out on the course and fly over, under, around and through the obstacles. To see him in the ring, knowing what he went through just a few months ago, is enough to renew one's faith in miracles.

While Lucky learned, Teresa found herself learning something, too. She learned that this sweet, petite Sheltie boy was something special in more ways than one and decided that she could not stand to think about letting him go. Two weeks later she made it official and adopted him herself.

Finally, there is Pepper. For me, she is the most significant because she was the first of Indiana Sheltie Rescue's (ISR) rescues. I also think she is the most special of all the Shelties I have helped rescue.

In the spring of 1999, some people took a Sheltie puppy they called Shelby to a vet in Bloomington, Illinois. In a coma and suffering seizures as if an epileptic, this nine week old, tri-color girl seemed to have little chance for survival.

According to the people that who saved her, her owner had beaten her with a Louisville Slugger in an attempt to kill her. The why of it they never discovered. They only knew that they must intervene. They finally managed to get her away from her abuser and deliver her into the caring hands of a veterinarian.

After his initial examination, the vet thought her chances of surviving the night hovered between slim and non-existent. Besides the coma and the seizure,

she had a fractured neck and broken foreleg. Only a miracle would let her live until morning. Evidently God felt generous with his miracles that night. By sunrise Shelby had not only survived but was slowly regaining consciousness.

By mid-day she managed to get up and stagger around the office, but kept bouncing off the walls like a ball in a bumper pool game. The vet thought she might be blind. Fortunately that condition disappeared over the next few days and her prognosis steadily improved. By the end of the week, the vet conditionally released her to the local Sheltie rescue group.

The first hurdle for rescue came when her owner tried to get her back. Fortunately, thanks to the intervention of the local prosecutor, both sides managed to reach an arrangement and her owner released her to rescue, where she continued to recover for the next few weeks.

Once her recovery progressed to the point where her adoption became possible, the group coordinator placed her photo and biography on the group's web site. In the meantime, Shelby moved to her new foster home in Noblesville.

That is when my wife and I found out about her. She filled our desires perfectly. Her markings were identical to those of the first Sheltie I had owned many years ago. She bore the same name as my wife (though for some strange reason my wife insisted we change that) and, like me, she had survived a life threatening experience after the doctors wrote her off. This little girl had a strong will and deserved a break. As soon as the adoption could be completed, Shelby, now known forever more as Pepper, became the newest member of our family. In spite of her early experience with the cruelty of man, she has grown to be a sweet, friendly, and somewhat ornery young lady, always prowling for a warm, soft lap to curl up on, and a friendly face to give a tongue bath.

Yes, it is true that there is much joy and happiness in volunteering for rescue work, but there are also those rare occasions when the pain almost makes it too much. Even the parting can be rough on the volunteer, watching the dog he has dedicated part of his life to getting into a car and leaving for a strange, new home. But with that kind of pain comes the satisfaction of a job done well.

Fun and Excitement Working at the State Fair

By Kim Caban

The one job that I've worked at that stands out the most to me is working the Indiana State Fair during the summer before I became a senior in high school. Working the fair was a very memorable job for me not because of the pay, which wasn't good, but for all the different things that happened during the fair. Although the pay wasn't great working at the fair, I would do it all over again just to go through all the great times that I had during that summer working at the fair.

Tangie, my best friend, helped me get hired working on the shuttle because she had previously worked there. My job was easy; all I had to do was collect fifty cents per person for anyone who wanted to ride around the fairground.

One thing that made working on the shuttle fun for me was the people I met who also worked there. Kevin was a cowboy who also worked on the shuttle

as the tractor driver pulling the carts. Even though I was not able to talk to Kevin the way that I could talk to the other collectors, when I did talk to Kevin, he always had something funny to say that made me laugh. I remember one day when it was time for us to get off Kevin was sitting on a bench, and I went over to talk to him. Kevin had shorts on this day and he had tried to use this sunless tanning lotion. I guess you could say that he didn't know what he was doing because he had orange stripped legs. Kevin is a country boy and when he put the lotion on he put it on like any other lotion and he didn't make sure to make it equal throughout his whole leg. Kevin only put the lotion on his legs so from the waist down he looked like a Zebra. Kevin explained later that he didn't know how to put the lotion on and that he only used it so that his upper body matched his arms.

Another person I met who stands out for me was Katrina. Katrina also collected money but for a different shuttle. She was about the same age as I and she loved the Backstreet Boys. During the fair the Backstreet Boys came to town and Katrina went to the concert. I guess she had a great time because when she came to work the next morning, she left her

voice at the concert. Katrina was a really nice person who Tangie and I could talk with.

Another thing that made my job fun was that I didn't ever really have the same kind of day. I like to work in a place where there is always change. Some of the things that were different everyday were the activities that were going on at the fair. August 18th was Clown Day. Clown Day was basically when all the different clowns would walk around the fairgrounds all day and do different things such as giving stickers out and making balloons for kids. Some of the clowns would ride on the back of my shuttle and they would pass out stuff to kids. Darren was one of the tractor drivers but on Clown Day he was a cowboy clown. Darren rode on the back of my shuttle that day for a couple of hours and conducted for a while. Tangie and I had our picture taken with some of the clowns that rode on our shuttles. Then at five o'clock all the clowns that were there walked down the Main Street and gave out stickers and some of them even played instruments.

One activity that I thought was different from anything that I have been used to was the harness racing that went on two days of the fair. Tangie had

explained to me some of the things about the horses that I would have never caught on to without her explaining them to me. She explained to me the difference between a pacer and a trotter. She told me that sometimes the trainer will tie the horses legs together so that when their left front leg moves so does their left back foot. That type of horse is called a pacer and it is very unnatural for the horse to run that way. I don't really know too much about horses, but it was fun and exciting for me to watch the horses race from my shuttle as it went by the Marsh Grandstand.

The one day that stands out the most for me was Saturday, August 11th which was the day that the rodeo came to the fair. I really liked this activity because I was able to go to the rodeo when I got off work. Tangie had talked me into going to the rodeo since I had never gone before and she thought that I would like it. This was also the day that I bought my first cowboy hat. I was really excited about the rodeo all day when I was on the shuttle. I looked like a kid at the candy store. When the rodeo first started, I was on the edge of my seat full of excitement. I enjoyed the whole rodeo but the event that I couldn't take my

eyes off of was the bull riding.

Another thing that made my job fun was that during the whole fair Q-95 had a survivor game going on. For some reason I rooted for this guy named Rupert. Rupert was a big burley guy who looked liked he could be your worst nightmare, but he wasn't. Rupert was a very nice type of person who could always be found smiling and waving at people. As the game continued, I was pulling for Rupert to win the grand prize which was a red Ford truck. The Q-95 game was very much like the Survivors that was on t.v. Each day the contestants would have tasks to complete and at about seven o'clock or so the tribe would meet and vote someone off. One of the tasks that they had to complete was standing on a two foot high poll holding cotton candy above their heads as long as they could. Another task was to eat all day at the fair with only three dollars. That would be really hard to only have three dollars to last you through breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the fair. I think it would be extremely hard to have to do the things they had to do and what made matters worse was that they had to sleep in the Survivor Hut until they were voted off. When the last day came, the only two people that



were left were Missy and Rupert. I guess my support didn't help much because Missy won.

The best part for me about working the fair was that I had the house all to myself because my mom also worked the fair but she worked the night shift. When I got off and was going home, mom was going to work and by the time that she was arriving at home I was deep in my sleep. Since I had the house to myself, I had Tangie stay with me because I was taking her back and forth to work. When Tangie and I are together there is never really a dull moment. We would go and do different things when we got off. We'd go and rent movies, run around the fair, and we went downtown and painted the canal with sidewalk chalk.

Overall the fair wasn't the best paying job, but it was the fun and excitement around me that made this job memorable.



Facts about Breast Cancer

By Nicole Jones

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women. The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2001, 192,200 cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed among women in the United States. There is also an estimate of 1,500 cases that will occur in men. This deadly disease is the second-leading cause of cancer in women ranging from 40 to 55 years of age. Statistics show that in 2001, 40,600 people are projected to die from breast cancer. This large number includes 40,200 women and 400 men. (Mammograms, 2001)

Early detection is very crucial in fighting this deadly disease. When breast cancer is found and treated early, the chances for survival are better. Regular mammograms can cut the death rate by a large number. Mammograms are urged especially for women after menopause. Epidemiologist Robert A. Smith says, "Women should be told that if they get regular screening, they will reduce their risk of dying from breast cancer by about two-thirds"

(Mammograms, 2001). Although mammography does not detect every cancer, the fact is, despite some limitations, quality mammography can shorten the time to diagnosis and spotting many breast cancers while they are small and curable. Early detection does not guarantee a cure, but can be an advantage in effective treatment. Also, a self-breast examination is very important in early detection. This procedure should be done two to three days after a woman's period ends because the breasts are less likely to be swollen or tender and any hormonally related lumpy areas return to normal. If a woman no longer has her period, she should schedule her exam for the first day of each month to make it easier to remember. It is important for a woman to know her body because becoming familiar with the normal lumps in the breast can give her peace of mind. A clinical breast exam is important also. This consists of visual and physical examinations when a woman visits her physician for an annual Pap smear. Most breast cancers may start growing for some time before they can actually be felt. Experts say that finding a tumor while it is still small can make a huge difference in long-term prognosis.

There are many different preventive measurements to take against breast cancer. Some experts say eating healthy and exercising are good ways to try and prevent breast cancer. In 1994, some informative news came out around the country about exercising to prevent breast cancer in young women. Dr. Leslie Bernstein at the University of Southern California's North Cancer Center showed that women under forty who exercised four times a week had fifty-eight percent less risk of getting breast cancer than the women who did not. One to three hours of exercise a week seemed to cut the risk by thirty percent. In exercising the most important thing to remember is once starting an excercising program, it is a good idea to keep doing it. One should start out slowly and stick to the routine. Eating healthy never hurt anyone. "It's especially good for young women who are still growing. If you've reached your full height, it's not as difficult to find a sensible nutrition program" (Eisenpreis, 1997). Even though exercising and eating right are two ways to minimize the chance of getting breast cancer, it is not a full guarantee that a woman will not get the disease.

Being diagnosed with breast cancer is not the end

of the world. There are a number of hopeful treatments against breast cancer. Radiation can be an effective treatment, but more and more people are seeking alternate methods of trying to control the disease. One hopeful treatment is called taxol. In 1994 taxol was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Although this is not a cure, studies show that it momentarily stopped tumor growth in 25 to 30 percent of advanced cancer patients who did not respond to other breast cancer related drugs. There is one traditional method that has not yet been published. It is called the Traditional Chinese Medicine for Breast Cancer, better known as TCM. This method addresses the root cause of breast cancer. This means finding the main cause of the cancer and where it initially starts. TCM helps natural and self-healing strategies to help those with breast cancer reduce their risk of the breast cancer returning. It also helps others reduce their risk of ever getting the disease. The TCM includes herbs for healing. Certain herbs have medicinal value, but Chinese herbs form a major healing resource. Herbs are often selected in accordance with symptoms; for example, ginseng is good for low energy. People can end up tak-



ing a large number of herbs at the same time. TCM looks beyond the symptoms, and the whole focus with Chinese herbs is internal, not external. These Chinese herbs have boosted the T-cell counts and rejuvenated the immune system and also provided the body's organs to return to a normal relationship. The TCM Foundation has originated the Breast Cancer Project to inform women about a positive self-healing program. It includes a book and video to help restore the health of a breast cancer patient.

The real risks of breast cancer are seldom talked about. Unfortunately, most of the known risks are things women know little about, such as having a family history of the disease. There are secondary risk factors as well. This consists of diet and obesity, but these risks can be changed. It is unknown how much these two factors will reduce a woman's risk of breast cancer.

There are three terms of risks that epidemiologists use when discussing risks for breast cancer patients. One risk is called absolute risk. This is the probability of developing or dying of breast cancer in specified time period. Another type of risk is called relative risk. This applies to the chances of getting



breast cancer if a woman has a particular risk factor, compared to someone who does not. Attribute risk relates to what percentage of a disease can be associated to a specific exposure. Experts say 30 percent of cancers are linked to dietary causes. It should be stressed that if one is a part of a particular risk factor, this doesn't mean that breast cancer will actually occur, but one's chances are increased by a certain amount.

Coping with breast cancer is not easy for anyone. Today there are numerous support groups and resources available to those who need help in fighting this disease. The National Cancer Institute is one of the most popular resources out there today. This institute specializes in helping people physically and emotionally. It has the knowledge of the best doctors in the country. Staying positive, working together and doing the proper research may one day contribute to a cure of breast cancer and that would be something worth fighting for.



The First Day of Basic Training

By Yvonne L. Russel

During my high school years, I participated in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. I knew after my first semester that at some point in time, I wanted a career in the armed forces. After my graduation in 1980, I decided to join the U.S. Army Reserves. This was the perfect way for me to serve my country and still be able to pursue my other goals. After passing the initial physical and entrance exams, I was sworn in and I flew to my basic training station at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

The first day of basic training is one that I will never forget. Upon my arrival at the reception station, a drill sergeant began letting everyone know that we belonged to him and immediately began marking his territory. He barked orders at the top of his lungs and delighted in the fact that he was in control. His eyes seemed to glisten and gleam as the new recruits scurried around in total confusion. During my time at the reception station, one of my drill sergeants gave a speech that thousands of recruits before and

after me have heard. “You are the property of Uncle Sam. I will now be your mother, father, sister, and brother throughout your military career. You belong to me now!” Judging by the surprised look on everyone’s face, we all began to wonder what would lie ahead in the coming days and weeks.

Next, was the task of being searched for illegal contraband. We were “instructed” to dump all of the contents of our luggage on the table as yet another drill sergeant searched methodically through each and every piece of our personal effects. One by one, we were herded into a room with a single toilet and only one way in or out. This was your last opportunity to get rid of any contraband that was not confiscated in the first search. They also frisked us to make sure that no illegal weapons were being slipped into the barracks area. After being degraded for what seemed like an eternity, we were taken to an assembly area in the comfort of a cattle car. During the ride to the site, we began introducing ourselves to the people that we would eat, sleep, and train with for the next eight weeks and well into my military career. On that warm October night in 1981, I started to form friendships that would last well past my eight weeks of basic



training. On that night, I began to see the world beyond the big city, and to open up to a new world outside of my high school friends and family. I knew that in the long run that I would take more away from this experience than I could begin to imagine. After the briefing, we finally made it to the barracks. As I laid awake in my new home for the next eight weeks, I knew that I had made the right choice of joining the armed forces.



My Family I Do Love

by Anjala Batchfield

My Grandparents always told me about
Pearl Harbor
And what they were doing the day of those
Awful Attacks
How We were attacked because We
Were not watching our backs
My parents remember where they were
The day that Kennedy was shot and died
They remember how they felt
How the Nation mourned and cried
My dreams were so Innocent
I was so blind
Our Nation is The Hero
We keep people alive
No one hates us
We are who everyone wants to be
On September 10, 2001
This is what I truly believed
Then came September 11, 2001
We were being attacked
We were under the gun
We did not seem like The Heroes
We seemed weak
All of our Strength was gone
I saw people running
I was never so scared
As I saw the faces of the people
Running from there
Those people in those airplanes
They knew what was to come

Oh, how I wish they could have just run
I will never forget the image
Of those jumping from the buildings
Just so they did not have to suffer
And burn alive in those flames
I will never forget the sound of the reporters and newscasters
Not knowing what to say
I fought hard not to breakdown and cry
I could feel the tears well up in my eyes
Then, I felt something that
I had never felt before
Pure Anger
Anger in the rawest form
I wanted to lash out
I wanted revenge
I wanted it more and more
I also remember seeing those Firefighters
Who erected Our Flag
How they were giving it EVERYTHING that they had
So many friends lost
And family, too
And though I might not have known
All of those lost that fateful day
They were my family and friends
In sort of a way
For in this Country
No matter who we are
We were Family
An American Family
I will fight for my Family
And My Family I will defend
For this Country is My Family
And My Family I do Love.

Have Yourself a Merry Christmas

By Mary Lankford

The aroma of fresh baked cookies lingered in the air, and the reflection of Christmas lights danced on the walls. I placed the cookies carefully on a plate beside the tree along with a glass of ice cold milk. Before tiptoeing up to my room, I took one last look at the pile of presents under the glowing branches. By morning, the room would be overflowing with gifts from Him. We all know who he is. Every child during Christmas eagerly awaits the arrival of the jolly, rosy-cheeked, plump man in the big red suit called Santa Claus. We've all experienced the anticipation of waiting until morning to see if it would be coal or candy in our stockings. There would be no coal in my stockings this year. No sir! I made sure to mind my P's and Q's all year. I even left out my mom's best cookies, so I should have a reserved spot on Santa's nice list. Tomorrow morning, I'll wake up to see that the cookies were eaten and washed down with the refreshing glass of milk. If so, I will have proof that Santa exists. Little did I know that Mr.

Claus was merely a figment of my imagination. When I finally realized this, my perspective of the holiday changed completely. Over the years, Christmas changed from a magical night of reindeer and presents to a day in which I could spend time with the ones I love.

This is it! Christmas is here! I raced down the stairs nearly tripping over my own feet in excitement. What I saw almost took my breath away. There were presents galore! I giggled with glee as I tried to take it all in. There were big and small gifts all covered in a colorful array of wrapping paper. There were huge boxes piled everywhere. Some were even too big to fit under the tree. The presents seemed to be calling out to me “Open me, Mary! Open me!” I wanted to tear them open and ravish the gifts. I had to remind myself that I had to wait for the rest of the family to wake up before I could touch any of the presents. It was the family rule. I was about to run upstairs and wake everyone up, but something stopped me. I had not checked to see if St. Nick had paid me a visit. My eyes darted across the room, frantically searching for the plate. Low and behold, there lay a plate of half-eaten cookies and an empty glass. Oh, it’s true! It’s

true! Santa visited my house. He was in this very room! I ran over to check in my stocking to see if he had mistakenly put coal in it. Gladly enough, there was candy overflowing from the stocking. I knew he existed. Now that I got that business taken care of, it was time for the important stuff: the presents!

After opening the presents and cleaning up the seemingly endless wads of wrapping paper, we all sat down for our traditional Christmas breakfast. As my mother and father went into the kitchen to fetch the food, I sat happily at the table thinking about all of the gifts I received. However, my blissful thinking was interrupted by a life-altering realization. I heard my mother ask my father if he had remembered to eat some of the cookies and drink the milk. Could she be talking about the cookies that I left out for Santa? I listened a little harder, and what I heard made my heart stop. She told him that he did a good job acting as Santa Claus. She even said he should consider making it a profession! Every word after that seemed to be meaningless jargon. I could not hear it, because my mind was swirling in utter amazement. I was tricked! There was no Santa Claus! The jolly man was simply a folktale, a lie! How could my parents tell me



all those stories about reindeer and elves for all of these years? I didn't know what to say or do. Tears started to fill up in my eyes, and I began to sob. This could not be happening. I was completely shocked. I knew from that day on that Christmas would never be the same.

A year later, Christmas arrived in a different tone. We still had our traditional breakfast, but I no longer waited for jolly, old St. Nick to make an appearance. This year gifts came second in my mind. When I woke up that morning, it wasn't the gifts I was excited to see... it was the looks on my family's faces when they opened my gifts to them. I wanted to see their smiling faces more than I wanted to open my own gifts. Whether or not I got what I wanted was unimportant. I understood now how my family must have felt when they saw how excited I was to open my presents all those years before. I finally realized that Santa and presents weren't the most important things during Christmas. Spending time with my family was the most important aspect of it all. Santa Claus was a distant memory. As the day went on, I wished I could keep all the happiness and love wrapped up in my pocket forever. No other day seemed to be filled

with as much joy as there was that Christmas.

Years have passed since that tragic incident in the kitchen. I have long since forgiven my parents for telling me lies about the existence of Santa Claus. Looking back, I now am thankful for realizing the truth about him. If I had not found out, I might have never realized the true meaning of Christmas. Yes, it is nice to receive gifts, but it's even better to give them. Christmas will always be the time of year I anticipate the most, because it is a day I can spend precious time with the ones I hold dear. Even though I know he doesn't exist, I still like to think that Santa Claus stops by my house each year to catch up for lost time. After all, I'm still a kid at heart.



Small Miracles

By Amy Lynn Scott

The day Katie was born her family was sure that God had sent them an angel. No one ever dreamed that such a little girl would be chosen to teach what to some are big lessons. Katie was not born into my family, yet when I held her there was an immediate bond. I was amazed at the beauty I saw in her eyes. Her hair was strawberry blonde, her eyes the most beautiful icy blue. Katie was special from the beginning.

Being born with Downs Syndrome, Katie had bigger mountains to climb than most children did. Doctors did not give her much of a chance to live what we consider normal lives. She had to work much harder at sitting up, standing, and reaching milestones that happen naturally for other children.

I remember holding her, rocking her, and singing to her, as we would stare into each other's souls. Lost in those little blue eyes, it was like nothing else mattered when I had her in my arms, her tiny fingers wrapped around one of mine. Later, I was able to celebrate with her as she slowly met her milestone

goals, reaching, crawling, sitting up, feeding herself, and finally walking. It was amazing the perseverance this little girl had. By the time she was two-years-old, she was doing almost everything the doctors said she would never do.

Katie's biggest challenge was speech. She made many sounds; however, she was not able to make words. She knew some words such as doll, toy, drink, food, etc. She could point out specific animals in books, yet she could not say their names.

When she was a toddler in my lap, I sang songs that had hand motions. Katie would pick up on these very quickly. For hours, I would sing and she would sing along with me — not making any words just sounds. She would start by holding my hands as I did the motions. Eventually she was able to do the motions by herself. She was proud of her new accomplishment.

Katie could communicate in ways that most adults will never do. She never met anyone whom she did not love. The first time she saw a person she would hug that person with a hug that said: "I've known you my whole life." Because of her disease and the love she received from her family and friends,



Katie was unable to understand feelings such as hate, shame, or anything other than unconditional love. She did not judge people by the way they looked or acted. Katie just loved. That was all she could do, that is all she understood. She did not see imperfections in people. Sometimes I felt like she could see directly into my heart. The days I spent with Katie are special to me. They will always be a part of who I am.

Katie had to have open heart surgery when she was four-years-old. On the outside, she looked like a healthy little miracle. On the inside, her heart was not working right. This was to be an easy surgery: go in, fix the problem, and she could be home again in a few days.

The night before Katie went to the hospital, we played our last finger game. I think that she knew what was to come. I thought that I was holding her and rocking her to sleep, now I know that she was really holding me.

She made it through her surgery and everything was going great. I knew she would be fine. She was a fighter. However, that night she had complications. The doctors and nurses did the best they could, but she ended up in a coma.

When I saw her, Katie was connected to tubes from her heart and wires protruded everywhere. She was in a toddler-sized hospital gown and her mom had tied pink ribbons in her hair. Katie liked to be pretty.

The doctors were doubtful that she would come out of this. During a two-day period they ran all kinds of tests and concluded that she was brain dead. Her family made the final decision to disconnect the machines. They called me and told me to come. When I got there, her mom asked if I wanted to hold her again. I did.

I held a lifeless Katie in my arms, close to my chest. I sang one last song to her, her favorite, the one about monkeys swinging in a tree. I cried, from the deepest part of my soul.

Before I put her back in her mother's arms, I heard in my mind a sweet voice, "It's ok, I am ok. You go and be a nurse and take care of these other sick children."

That was the day that I decided that I would someday be a nurse. I had been thinking about it, but I was afraid I couldn't handle losing a patient or dealing with sick children. Katie taught me that my heart

is strong enough and that I could be a nurse. She taught me to look beyond the disabilities and to judge no one, for that is not my right. Mostly she taught me about letting go.



The Curious Visitors

By Linda Myers

When I was about seven years of age, my parents, two sisters and I moved to a small farm. The farm was on Bogue's Apple Orchard Road, about three-fourths of a mile from the railroad tracks. Life was never boring on the farm. There was always the animals to feed and care for each day, lots of playing "Let's Pretend", and the occasional occurrence of the unexpected.

One of my fondest memories is watching the mother cats feed and give their babies a bath. This never failed to fascinate me and I could watch contentedly this everyday process. One morning, as I was sitting on the back steps watching one of the mother cats bathe her young, I saw a man in mismatched clothing walking across our yard approaching the back steps. I quickly jumped up and ran inside to tell my Mother a stranger was coming up to the door.

Both my sisters and I peered from behind our Mother as she answered the knock at the door. "Could I trouble you for some breakfast? I would be happy to do some work in exchange for the food,



ma'am." Our Mother, having sternly warned us about associating with strangers, surprised us with her reply, " You wait here on the back steps and I will fix you some breakfast."

As Mother went about busily preparing a breakfast fit for royalty for this stranger, we asked, "Who is he, Mother?" She explained to us he was a hobo, a person who apparently had no home and crossed the country by train hiding out in boxcars. She also explained he would have to stay outside and eat on the back porch. This seemed a strange place to make someone eat, since we always fed the cats scraps in old metal plates on the back porch.

Mother prepared a breakfast of bacon and eggs, pancakes, oatmeal, freshly squeezed orange juice and coffee. She took this small feast out to the hobo. As he sat quietly eating his food, six eyes were fixed on him. Mother scolded, "Get away from the door, girls!" Nevertheless, we couldn't help but sneakily stare from the corner of our eyes. When he finished, she offered him seconds. He gratefully accepted. When he finished the second time, he again offered to do some work in payment for the food. Our Mother, however, told him that was not necessary.



He then left, walking back in the direction of the railroad.

We lived on the farm for another three summers, and every summer at least one hobo would come. It was always exciting for some reason. There was an air of mystery around these characters. They always sat silently eating. Of course, as curious children, we always had to be reminded to stay away from the door and not to stare. But my Mother extended her kindness to each hobo that stopped. After they would leave, my sisters and I would go off to play and talk about the curious strangers, wondering where they had come from and where they were headed.

The hobos are still a topic of conversation today each time my sisters and I get together to reminisce about our days growing up on the farm. Those conversations take us back instantly to the kindness and security of growing up in a time when people didn't lock their doors and were not afraid to offer help to a stranger.



The Right to Privacy

By William Dezam

Privacy, “The most comprehensive of rights, and the right most valued by civilized men” (Supreme Court Justice, Louis Brandeis, 1928). If this is true, then why are we now willing to sacrifice that privacy? Things were going rather well in making sure that our privacy, in regards to the government, insurance companies, and marketers, was well protected. September 11th changed all that, in addition to the obvious shockwaves that were sent through American society. In a rush to help, people around the country donated blood, money, and services to aid the families of the victims and to aid those sworn to rescue who they could and recover who they must.

In addition to this, people have demanded better security by any means possible to make sure this cannot happen again, but we must be careful what we give up for that security. Right now, there are several people and groups that are trying to ensure our safety by destroying something golden: our privacy. It is something we all take for granted, and, if we are not



careful, may lose. "The bottom line is that for now, privacy will take a backseat to security" (Fortune, 2001). While true and understandable, if we let it go too far, we may never find our way back. We all must sacrifice a little to achieve our dreams of safety, but freedom is never free, and if it is, it might not be freedom.

Some feel that security is more important than privacy: that if America is not safe, then what good is privacy? In light of recent events like the September 11th attacks and the mailing of anthrax spores, security must be our number one priority, no matter the cost. The Internet should be monitored as closely as resources allow to intercept communications sent by terrorists. With modern technology's ability to garble, and even hide, electronic messages with a startling efficiency, stronger methods must be implemented to intercept hidden agendas. Law enforcement should also be better able to operate surveillance upon people with fewer stipulations and fewer strings attached, and anyone who is opposed to being watched, listened to, and having their communications screened, analyzed, and archived, has something to hide.

How would you react if you knew that an e-mail



that you had sent to your brother was read by someone from the Federal Bureau of Investigation or other government monitoring agency? Would you feel violated? It depends. You may feel secure, knowing that, even at the expense of a little of your privacy, the unseen agents at the other end of the line are insuring our security. Now, let us assume it was a message to a lover with some rather provocative, intimate material inside? Some of you voyeurs may not feel violated, but the vast majority of everyone else would definitely feel violated! Even worse, what if the person monitoring the message was someone you knew!?

Another example would be that an e-mail containing a few key words like anthrax, bomb, mail, and attack may be flagged and then your outgoing messages would start being directly monitored. That could be triggered with a couple of sentences like: “After the 9-11 attack, people started sending anthrax through the mail. That’s terrible, next they’ll start sending mailbombs!” This would be flagged by any sifting program as a sender that needs to be further investigated.

Our society, and especially law enforcement, is

evolving to the point that everyone is being treated like a criminal. People living in the inner cities, especially African Americans have experienced this for years. If a group of young black men are standing around in some cities, they are profiled and treated like criminals until they can prove that they are innocent of any wrong doing. A similar form of this has been slowly brewing for many years to sweep the entire nation. Maybe it will be called “everyone profiling.” If anyone is observed to behave or communicate in an odd or inappropriate manner, they will be profiled and treated like a criminal until they can prove that they are innocent of any wrong doing. That would take care of racism in a sense, because everyone would equally be the victim! Of course this sounds like something from a science fiction novel, but so did the nuclear bomb!

So, why not encrypt Internet communications? Encryption is a method by which normal text can be garbled in such a way to make it impossible to read without a special code, or key. Terrorists have been known to use encryption in the past. There are several free programs that can be downloaded for free from the Internet, like PGP, or Pretty Good Privacy.



These programs encrypt e-mail and files so that it is very hard for anyone except the intended recipient to see what they are.

Because less than 1 percent of all Internet e-mail is encrypted, the use of encryption attracts attention. Even if a communication cannot be cracked, it is still subject to 'traffic analysis,' which can determine where and when it was sent (<http://www.sirs.com>).

Experts think that terrorists are well aware of this fact and have moved to an alternate method: hiding messages in the open. This can be achieved simply by sending an un-encrypted e-mail talking about the plans using predetermined code words, like saying chicken instead of bomb or 'see you on the plane' instead of hi-jack.

There is also another way to hide messages in the open. A technology called steganography can hide a file within a picture or music file on the Internet. Analysts think that terrorists may be communicating this way, but there is no proof. These files can be placed anywhere, like on pornographic web sites or just on a random web page. It is impossible to search every single picture and music file on the Internet, so, even if they are using it, the chances of a message



being found are very narrow.

Now, the danger lies in that some government officials and agencies like the National Security Agency have been trying for years, unsuccessfully, to outlaw existing, and very powerful, encryption technology and other such technologies. They wish to replace it with a national standard that all computers in this country would use. A national standard that they would have the universal encryption key for!

This would obviously give them an upper hand on the terrorists, or would it? What would stop the terrorists from just hiding the messages in the open? The answer is absolutely nothing. So what good is such legislation? Law enforcement could use it to break into any network or database in the country to gather information on anyone they want. The benefits of this are highly debatable, but pale in comparison to the real potential danger. Imagine that a computer hacker, or worse, a foreign government, were able to obtain the governments universal key. Now that would be a true crisis to national security! It would happen, eventually. There are thousands, tens of thousands, or maybe even hundreds of thousands of hackers around the world that would throw every



waking moment of their lives at getting the encryption key. It's personal value to a hacker is unimaginable, and on the black market, such a secret would be priceless.

Of course, all of this may sound like paranoid ranting about the government, but there are several others, such as insurance companies and marketing firms, that would just love for you to not have any privacy. Steps have been taken to protect the public from the practices of financial institutions, like determining whether one qualifies for a loan based on confidential healthcare information.

A new federal privacy rule will make it illegal for health providers and insurers to improperly release patients' medical details without their consent. It will also require employers that process claims in-house to maintain a firewall between the benefits office and the rest of the company (<http://www.epnet.com>).

Unfortunately, this new law will not take effect until April 15, 2003. Meanwhile, the ever-widening security gap in medical privacy allows for unsavory practices to still be used to discriminate against people with medical conditions. No mention of a bad medical record need be made to deny someone a loan

or policy, just that they did not qualify.

Also, marketing firms are always looking for ways to increase the effectiveness of their advertising, and a great way to do that, is by creating database profiles of the spending and Web surfing habits of customers. They can do this on the Internet through files called "cookies." These "cookies" enable a web site to track the places a person goes on-line to better understand what they may want to buy. Advertisers claim this helps them target customers and make sure that they receive advertisements for things they may want, not things they have no interest in. But, what if someone doesn't want an advertisement at all?

For years, almost everyone has received piles of useless mail that they never wanted, and now, that plague is spreading to the Internet, and growing with the Internet. Now, anyone with an e-mail address is almost certainly flooded with unsolicited messages, or spam, from places they have never done business with. The reason is simple. Somewhere along the way, a company they had done business with, put their customer's name, e-mail address, and, maybe, street address on a list with thousands of others, and sold the list to one or several companies, who then



sold your information to others. There are currently many parties on both sides that are fighting to either limit this practice, or keep it going strong.

In summary, there are many different levels of privacy, all of which need protection. The least important form is probably the practice of marketing firms. The leaking of medical data can be very dangerous however. Leaked medical information could potentially be used to violate one's civil liberties by discriminating against sick or disabled people. Luckily, there are legislative protections being put into action because of this blatant misuse that has taken place and still takes place.

In the end, the biggest worry in regards to privacy is the potential regulations put in place by the government in reaction to recent events. Privacy is what allows many other rights to exist. Examples include: protection from illegal search and seizure, the guarantee that one cannot be forced to give incriminating evidence against themselves, and the guarantee of equal treatment under the law for all U.S. citizens (Issues and Controversies, 2000). Lack of privacy would enable law enforcement to profile and harass people based on things that were none of their busi-



ness in the first place. In truth, maybe we should realize that if privacy did not exist, along with all of the other rights it provides, then what is left to protect?



Old Man Walt

By Kathy Bryan

Between the ages of fifteen to nineteen-years-old, I lived in a “little town” on the west side of Indianapolis called “The Valley.” I think it’s called this because the town sits at the bottom of a hill. When I lived there, an elderly man in his eighty’s lived across the street from me. His name was Walter, but the people living in The Valley knew him as “Old Man Walt.”

Donnie, who was my neighbor, told me that Walter was insane. “Sometimes Walt hears voices at night. I’ve seen him outside, cussing and yelling at them,” he said. And, a friend of mine, whose name was Melissa, told me that Old Man Walt was a drunk. “If you see him when you’re outside, just walk the other way,” she warned.

Walter was a loud man, especially when he was drunk. I found out that he had a metal plate in his head due to an injury from World War I. I never knew whether it was the alcohol or the plate in his head that made him crazy.

Whenever I saw him walking around outside, he

always had a brown paper bag in his hand. He occasionally carried a baseball bat in his other hand. A small, light-colored dog with curly fur would follow him everywhere. The dog hopped around with his back legs together because he had arthritis in his hips. I don't remember his name, but he was a sweet little dog.

Walter had thin white hair and a prickly, white, five o'clock shadow on his face. He dressed in raggedy clothes and wore an old baseball cap. Sometimes I would see him and his dog sitting in their front yard. Walter would sit in a chair and whittle little figures out of wood with a knife. The dog would watch the little flecks of wood chip off in different directions into the grass.

Walter also had a wife, but she didn't live with him. I assume it was because she didn't like the way he was. Even though she came to visit him every week, she would never stay long. I don't know her name and I never met her, but I always saw her when she'd come to visit him.

The children who played on our street would taunt and tease Walter. They called him obscene names, and sometimes they spit at him and his dog. It

never took long to get him angry. Sometimes he yelled and cussed until the police were called on him. I don't know what those children got out of treating him that way.

One day, Walter was outside yelling at the children again. I had finally had enough of it. I went outside and instructed the children to go somewhere else. Then, I went up to Walter and asked him to calm down.

Suddenly, his countenance changed. He looked at me with hope in his eyes and humbly asked, "Can you please help me? The light bulb in my living room has burned out, and I'm just too old and clumsy to change it myself. Could you change it for me?"

All Walter wanted was a little help. But, when he went outside to see if anyone was around who might lend a hand, he was mobbed by the cruel words of those rude children again. As usual, it didn't take long to get him angry. He just needed his light bulb changed, that's all.

Walter was relieved when I agreed to help. His little dog hopped after us as he led me around to his back door. When we walked through the door into his kitchen, I beheld an overwhelming mess of clutter.

tered, unwashed dishes and trash that were scattered all over the place. I cringed when I noticed the cockroaches and mice scurry past the beer cans and crumpled paper all over the floor.

When we walked into the living room, he pointed to the ladder that was already set up under the light. He continued to explain how he was afraid to climb the ladder. He also kept telling me how much he appreciated my help. Honestly, I just wanted to get out of there.

As I approached the ladder, I looked up at the light. I could see all the little shadows of what I assumed were hundreds of dead, and possibly, living bugs in the bottom of the light shade. When I replaced the bulb and climbed down the ladder, Walter thanked me and asked me to stay for a minute because he wanted to show me some things. Cynically, I wondered, “What in the world would Old Man Walt want to show me?” I wanted to leave, but I didn’t want to be rude. So, I stayed for a while.

Walter brought out a picture of his granddaughter, Wendy. “You look just like her,” he said, as he handed me the picture to see. When I looked at the picture I saw that he was right. We did look very

much alike. As I gazed at the picture, Walter went on to tell me how much he missed Wendy because she lived in another state. When I handed the picture back to him, I noticed that tears were filling his eyes. I felt sorry for him, but I was a little uncomfortable. I didn't know how to react to the situation. I couldn't just leave. So, I stayed a little longer.

Then Walter took me to the kitchen where he kept some antique jars. He used them to store things in when he was in the war. He told me that they were worth a lot of money because they were mementos from the war. He didn't say much about the war, but it was interesting just to be able to see the old jars that were used during an important time in our country's history.

After Walter put the jars back, he went into his living room and took out an old record. Then, he opened his old stereo that looked like a big wooden chest. I don't remember the name of the song he played, but I do remember that its melody was soft and sad. As we listened to the music, I saw the tears well up in his eyes again. Then, choking back his tears, he politely thanked me one last time for changing the light bulb. Then, he stood up to walk me back

outside.

From that day on, Walter and I shared a subtle bond of trust. It was an odd, low-key type of friendship. We never talked much, but we helped each other. Whenever I'd see the children outside teasing him, I'd just walk outside and look at them, as if to say, "What are you doing, and why are you doing it?" Then, being filled with shame, they would stop harassing him and go away. And, when I needed transportation, Walter would let me use his old, lime green, 1978 station wagon. It wasn't in great shape, but it would take me where I needed to go.

The last time I saw Walter was about four years ago. I paid him a visit just after I moved out of the Valley. This time things were different. Walter seemed alert, and in his right mind. He was well-groomed, his house was spotless, and the bugs and mice had nowhere to hide. "What happened to Old Man Walt?" I wondered.

I wasn't his only guest that day. An elderly woman, close to his age was there. She might have been a sister of his. I noticed the Bible was opened on the table in front of where they were sitting. They seemed to be having a good time and I didn't want to

intrude. So, before I could find out who the lady was or what had happened to Walter, I quickly said that I had things to do and that I needed to be going. Walter told me that he was glad to see me again and asked me to come back and visit him sometime. I agreed, and that was the last time I ever saw him.

I don't know if Walter is still alive or not. And, I never exactly found out what caused Walter to change, but I think it might have had something to do with what he and his friend were reading the day I visited him. He was an interesting man, and I often think about making a trip to The Valley to see if he's still there.



Wrong Job

By Kyle Rudolphi

When the thoughts of graduation parties, balloons, cute girls, and good friends started filling my head, it was no wonder I was grinning from ear to ear. With graduation only a few weeks away, it seemed as though everyone had a plan. I, on the other hand, did not. All I knew was that I was going to work directly out of high school and earn the money to go to college. I had worked several horrendous jobs after high school, which made me realize how important college is. The grinning was about to stop.

Early in the summer of 1999, Brian, who remains a good friend of mine, and I were downstairs doing the usual, shooting pool, throwing darts, playing video games, and talking the usual chit chat, when his dad, Bruce, came downstairs to see what we were up to. He and his wife own a well-established plumbing, heating and cooling business. He sat down on the couch and, with his usual cheery tone, asked, "What's up fellas?" He asked about some of the parties we had been going to and how many cute girls there were,

when he shifted in his chair, looked me straight in the eye and asked, "How would you like to be a plumber?"

"Uh, I'm not sure," I casually replied offguard.

"Well, down at the shop, we've got an opening for an apprentice position. I was wondering if you'd be interested?" He started explaining what the job consisted of and, to tell you the truth, it sounded pretty promising. Later that night, he gathered up some paperwork for me to fill out and asked me to be at the shop the next Monday morning at six.

Monday morning rolled around, and I crawled out of bed at five and drove half an hour to get there. I was already sleepy-eyed and yearning for a soft place to curl up for a couple of hours. When I got to his office, he asked me to sit down and wait for the plumber with whom I would be working. I sat for a solid 45 minutes when a short, stocky, dark-complexioned, half-smirking man strolled around the corner.

Bruce said, "This is Brian Stark. You'll be working with him. Just do what he asks and he'll teach you some things along the way." Brian had a smug, mischievous way about him, almost as if he were about to burst into laughter at any moment. When Brian and I got out to our truck, we set out for the jobsite

and started chatting. After a few minutes passed by, he pointed at the radio and said, “You can listen to whatever you want. It’s kind of nice to have someone else pick the tunes.” I am incredibly choosy about what music I listen to and directly headed toward X103. I must admit, I liked the guy already.

The first day was a long and tedious one. I learned how to install a new water heater, new faucets and shower heads, and learned the incredibly hilarious artform of how to get a 150 pound water heater into a basement. That consisted of wrestling it to the top of the stairway with it still in its box, then cautiously tipping it down so that it lay pointing downward, and finally, letting it loose and watching it bombard and bounce down the stairs, colliding with whatever was in its path! I don’t know how many times the painters upstairs complained, or cursed, at us for causing dust to settle in their paint. It would literally shake the whole house. Once downstairs, it wasn’t so funny. Many times the basement smelled of dried up urine or feces from the construction workers. It rarely had lights and was foul and dirty all of the time. All the while, Brian was upstairs doing his cake job of installing fixtures, while I was downstairs playing in

the construction workers' sewer.

One job typically took about three to four hours. With three jobs in a day, working until six became almost guaranteed. That was the most tiresome and disgusting job I've ever had the pleasure of experiencing.

After trying my hand at plumbing, and with winter coming on, I decided to go to work indoors at Galyan's. The cashier mentioned the men's apparel section had an opening. Jeff, the manager, and I hit it off immediately, and he hired me on the spot. Jeff had long curly hair he'd sometimes wear in a ponytail, and a really pleasant way about him, not to mention a style that was all his own. He was one of those rare people who could try on the weirdest looking sunglasses and make them look cool. Jeff asked me one day after work to take care of his dogs while he was gone on vacation. I happily obliged.

As I walked in his house for the first time, I saw three massive dark brown dogs staring at me inquisitively. They reminded me of a cross between a black lab and a great dane. They were well-tempered dogs, and I had a lot of fun taking them for a walks, or rather, them taking me for walks.

The work at the store was not as cheerful. About a month after Christmas of 1999, I was transferred to the athletics department. The store manager thought it would suit both of our needs better. I was neutral. The department definitely had its upsides with lots of little gadgets to play with, balls to kick and throw around, fitness equipment to test out, and tennis rackets to be restrung. Restrunging rackets was crucial for my own mental health when sometimes dealing with customers was not on my list for the day. As a bonus, I didn't have to fold any more clothes. After my hours had been cut from 40 to 20, and my already minuscule paychecks were being cut in half, I decided to move on.

In the beginning of July of 2000, I asked my boss in athletics, Grady, if I would be able to transfer to Galyan's Distribution Center. He pulled some strings, and after I went in for my interviews, I was hired as a shipper.

I met my supervisor on my first nauseating day. Tom is the most Hitler-like man who has ever walked God's green earth. He was an obvious power and control freak right from the beginning. Embarrassing and humiliating people at meetings, making several of

the women co-workers cry, and sucking the life out of everyone around him like a large, black, squirming leech were some of his specialties. We never did see eye-to-eye. I became aware of several times when he attempted to fire me, but when he got to the meeting to voice his complaints about me, the board of supervisors reiterated time after time. "Kyle has shown an incredible aptitude and work ethic. Furthermore, he's developed outstanding leadership ability. We see no reason whatsoever to allow for termination." One of the board members herself informed me of their decision.

Supervisory hassles weren't the only thing wrong with this job. The job itself was tedious. My day consisted of getting to work at 6:30 in the morning, loading boxes for eight hours onto a blistering hot semi trailer, and later going home exhausted and aching. Warehousing was out.

I've been a part of some real winning professions in only two short years, but I'm beginning to see the picture. After all, I am attending Ivy Tech, and working toward a degree so I can get a job I enjoy. And if anyone ever asks me if I want to be a plumber again, I know what I can tell them.



How to Submit Your Manuscripts and Art Work to *New Voices*

It is a good idea to have your English instructor critique and edit your manuscript. When ready, the instructor collects two copies of your manuscript and one disk in Microsoft Word, 12 point, Times New Roman.

Leave your name off one copy of your manuscript.

Label your disk with your name, title of your work, and your instructor's name. Your disk should have your manuscript and mini-bio of yourself in 50 words or less. Nothing else should be on your disk.

Personal essays, short stories, poetry, and expository writing of all types are accepted. manuscripts of four pages or less will be given first consideration.

Original black and white artwork (of an appropriate size) may also be submitted to your instructor. Cover designs are welcome. Follow the same guidelines as for the written manuscript.

You may be asked to sign a permission form. Your instructor has the form.

NO work will be returned. By giving the manuscript and the art work to the instructor for this publication, you are granting permission to publish.

All manuscripts and art work are chosen by an editorial board. Authorship is not revealed until the material is accepted.

Any unpublished manuscripts or art work not published will be considered for a future issue.

